

CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS AND
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITESLES PARCS NATIONAUX ET LES LIEUX
HISTORIQUES NATIONAUX DU CANADA

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TÉLÉCOPIE

Nahanni National Park Reserve /

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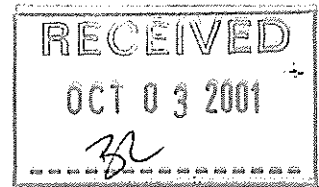
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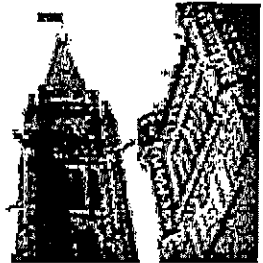
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Introducing the *Canada National Parks Act*



Bulletin 2

Legislation and Policy Branch

February 23, 2001

Park Management Planning

This is one in a series of information notes intended to provide you with an understanding of the content and background of the *Canada National Parks Act*.

Ecological Integrity is the First Priority

Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the protection of natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering all aspects of the management of parks (subsection 8.(2)).

Restoration of ecological integrity has been formally recognized. We will focus on maintaining or restoring natural processes as well as natural resources. Finally, ecological integrity will be the first priority in all aspects of park management. It is the park management plan that determines whether or not, with respect to a particular issue, the emphasis will be placed on maintenance or restoration. Taking such decisions through the management planning process ensures full public debate and transparency.

The Park Management Plan

Following the *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*, the park management plan is the most important document in governing how a park is managed. Because the park management plan is ultimately tabled in Parliament, it is essentially the Government's commitment or public promise as to how it will achieve ecological integrity and visitor experience goals for that particular national park. It is also the primary means whereby Canadians can direct the management of their parks and hold the Government accountable for its commitments. *

Under the former *National Parks Act*, the Minister was obliged, within five years of the establishment of a park, to table in Parliament a management plan in respect of resource protection, zoning, visitor use, and any other matter that the Minister considered appropriate. The Minister was required to provide opportunities for public participation at the national, regional and local levels and to review each park management plan every five years. The former *Act* also provided the authority to declare wilderness areas within parks upon the recommendation of the Minister. Finally, every two years, the Minister was to report to Parliament on the state of the parks and progress towards establishing new parks.

Many, including the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks, were critical of the *National Parks Act* for not providing more specific direction on management planning as well as measures of accountability.



CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS AND NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES

The Government Responded

The new *Canada National Parks Act* now provides very specific direction.

Objectives, indicators and evaluation

The Minister must still produce, within five years of a park being established, a management plan and must table the plan in Parliament. The plan must also still be reviewed every five years. Now, however, the *Act* specifies that each plan must contain:

- a long-term ecological vision for the park;
- a set of ecological integrity objectives and indicators; and
- provisions for resource protection and restoration, zoning, visitor use, public awareness and performance evaluation.

Never before was the concept of restoration enshrined in the legislation, nor was there a requirement for measurable objectives, indicators and an evaluation of performance in achieving those objectives.

While not a requirement of the new legislation, there are also two important obligations that flow from the Action Plan on Ecological Integrity. The first is the requirement for an annual report on management plan implementation. The second is the need for each park to produce a five-year State of the Park Report as a precursor to each five-year plan review.

Wilderness declaration now has a deadline

Where the park management plan sets out an area(s) for declaration as a wilderness area(s), the Minister must now recommend to the Governor in Council such declaration within one year of the tabling of a new or amended park management plan.

Consultation

In addition to the general consultation requirements under the former *Act* with regard to management planning, the new *Act* is specific in requiring that we consult with Aboriginal organizations and representatives of park communities. We must also consult on the establishment of declared wilderness areas.

So What?

All this means that the Minister and Parks Canada can be held more accountable for the content of timing and process for producing management plans. Managers will now be held more accountable for their performance in achieving specific goals according to defined indicators for their park.

Parks Canada**Guide to Management Planning**

A new guide to management planning has been produced. It provides direction for staff, as well as partners involved with the Agency in cooperative management, in the preparation of management plans for national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas. Its purpose is to clarify accountability and to set out nationally consistent standards. The new provisions of the *Canada National Parks Act* are central in this guide.

Declaration of wilderness areas will be integrated into the management planning process and a guide to declaring wilderness areas is included in the new *Parks Canada Guide to Management Planning*.

Need More Information?

Other information notes are available on various aspects of the *Act*. You can read these or contact the Legislation and Policy Branch at:

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You can also read the *Act* in detail on the Parks Canada Agency Web site at:
www.parkscanada.gc.ca/Library/acts/acts_e.htm

For further details on the *Parks Canada Guide to Management Planning*, contact:

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1987 plan amendments

MINISTER'S FOREWORD

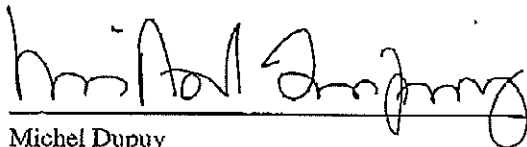
This document contains the decisions arising from the Nahanni National Park Reserve management plan review. They serve to heighten the significance of the park as an acclaimed wilderness river environment, the country's first UNESCO World Heritage site, and the designation of the South Nahanni River as a Canadian Heritage River. They also reflect Parks Canada's commitment to the preservation of ecological integrity as a priority in the management of the park.

Public review of the park management plan has also confirmed that the wilderness character of the park must remain uncompromised. To this end, I have agreed to designate the vast majority of the park as a wilderness area, by regulation, under the National Parks Act. As such, Nahanni will play a significant role in contributing towards an appreciation and protection of a wilderness heritage that is distinctly Canadian.

How people will gain access to and experience the park is a prominent concern of the plan amendments. Recognizing the need to maintain the essential wilderness character of the park, Parks Canada will manage day-use and river-use within the capacity of the wilderness to sustain these recreational pursuits. Ultimately, management prescriptions for day-use and river-use will incorporate limits on groups size and the number of people permitted to enter the park.

Parks Canada staff will continue to work with the local Dene and Metis communities in the protection and management of the park. The park's reserve status provides for the continuation of traditional hunting, fishing and trapping activities by local Aboriginal people in the park. If, during the life of the management plan, the settlement of Aboriginal land claims affects Nahanni National Park Reserve, the park plan will be adjusted as required.

I would like to thank the many people who helped contribute to the management plan review. Such interest ensures that Nahanni National Park Reserve will be managed in a manner that meets the high expectations of Canadians. I am pleased to approve the Management Plan Amendments for Nahanni National Park Reserve.



Michel Dupuy
Minister of Canadian Heritage





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review of the Nahanni National Park Reserve Management Plan has confirmed that the park purpose statement and the basic management objectives as presented in the 1987 plan remain valid. In the review, public at the national, regional, and local level considered several proposed amendments to the management plan. Amendments were required to clarify or detail issues affecting the park and are presented as revisions to two sections of the original plan. These amendments reflect Parks Canada's legislation and policy applied to Nahanni within the park's regional context. The statement of park purpose and management objectives, as presented in the original plan, will be met by the strategies detailed here and will be achieved within the spirit of the original plan. Highlights of the plan amendments include:

- maintenance of ecological integrity as a priority in the protection of park resources;
- refinements to cultural resource management objectives;
- incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge in decision-making for park resource management;
- improvements to the presentation of the park's natural and cultural resources;
- refinements to wilderness protection objectives, strategies for the management of wilderness recreational carrying capacities, and a proposal to designate, by regulation, the vast majority of the park as a wilderness area;
- recognition of pending settlements to Aboriginal land claims; and,
- changes in the park's administration and operation.

Canadians. Designation of the South Nahanni River as a Canadian Heritage River gives recognition to an outstanding example of several natural history themes and outstanding recreational opportunities in a wilderness area of great scenic beauty.

The national park segment of the South Nahanni River will be protected and presented in ways that ensure the preservation of distinctive heritage values for which the river was nominated. Parks Canada meets its obligations to the CHRS through its mandate and conservation practices. The park's management plan and the revisions presented here similarly reflect this responsibility. Parks Canada also maintains a CHRS plaque for the South Nahanni River at Virginia Falls.

2.3 CANADIAN NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

Nahanni National Park Reserve is an outstanding example of northern wilderness rivers, canyons, gorges and alpine tundra. Its designation as a national park gives protection for all time to a natural area of Canadian significance representative of the Mackenzie Mountains natural region and enables present and future generations to continue to appreciate and experience the park's wilderness environment.

To articulate the revisions to the 1987 management plan, the following additional objectives are to be achieved within the spirit of the confirmed park purpose statements and basic management objectives:

- maintain ecological integrity as a priority in the protection of park resources;
- characterize the park's wilderness heritage as the nature of its ecological integrity;
- present park values appropriate to its World Heritage Site, Canadian Heritage River, and National Park designations;
- incorporate traditional ecological knowledge, derived from past and current use of the region, as an important source of information in the protection of the park's cultural and natural heritage;
- protect and manage significant living and past cultural resources and environments, in accord with the principles of value, public benefit, understanding, respect, and integrity;
- ensure regional integration of the park's management and operation with those regional activities, tourism initiatives, and concerns that are compatible with the park's purpose and objectives; and,

- promote stewardship of the natural environment by communicating and demonstrating to the public the methods used by Parks Canada to maintain both the Nahanni ecosystem and the natural environment in general.

2.3.1 ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIMS

Settlements of Aboriginal land claims are pending for the area in which Nahanni National Park Reserve is located. Consequently, the park was set aside as a "national park reserve" under the National Parks Act. This reserve status provides for the continuation of traditional hunting, fishing and trapping activities by local Aboriginal people in the park. If, during the life of the management plan, the settlement of Aboriginal land claims affect Nahanni National Park Reserve, the park plan will be adjusted as required.

3.0 ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACH TO PARK MANAGEMENT

An ecosystem-based approach to management is fundamental to meeting the challenge of protecting the integrity of Nahanni National Park Reserve. This approach will integrate the management of natural landscapes, ecological processes, wildlife species, cultural resources, and human activities both within and adjacent to the park. Strategies for an ecosystem-based approach to management in Nahanni National Park Reserve will:

- maintain ecological integrity as a priority in the protection of park resources;
- take a holistic view of the natural environment;
- encourage collaboration among regional governing bodies responsible for the management of natural, cultural and socio-economic issues, having the potential to influence the integrity of the park's ecosystems;
- facilitate the integration of resource management within the park and the region;
- incorporate traditional ecological knowledge as part of a comprehensive data base for the protection and management of the park's ecosystems; and
- promote stewardship of the natural environment in general.

*3.1 GREATER NAHANNI ECOSYSTEM

Nahanni National Park occupies one-seventh of the South Nahanni watershed (fig.1). This watershed drains an area of 35,000 square kilometres, which then enters the Mackenzie River drainage basin via the Liard River. To date, the

NAHANNI NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

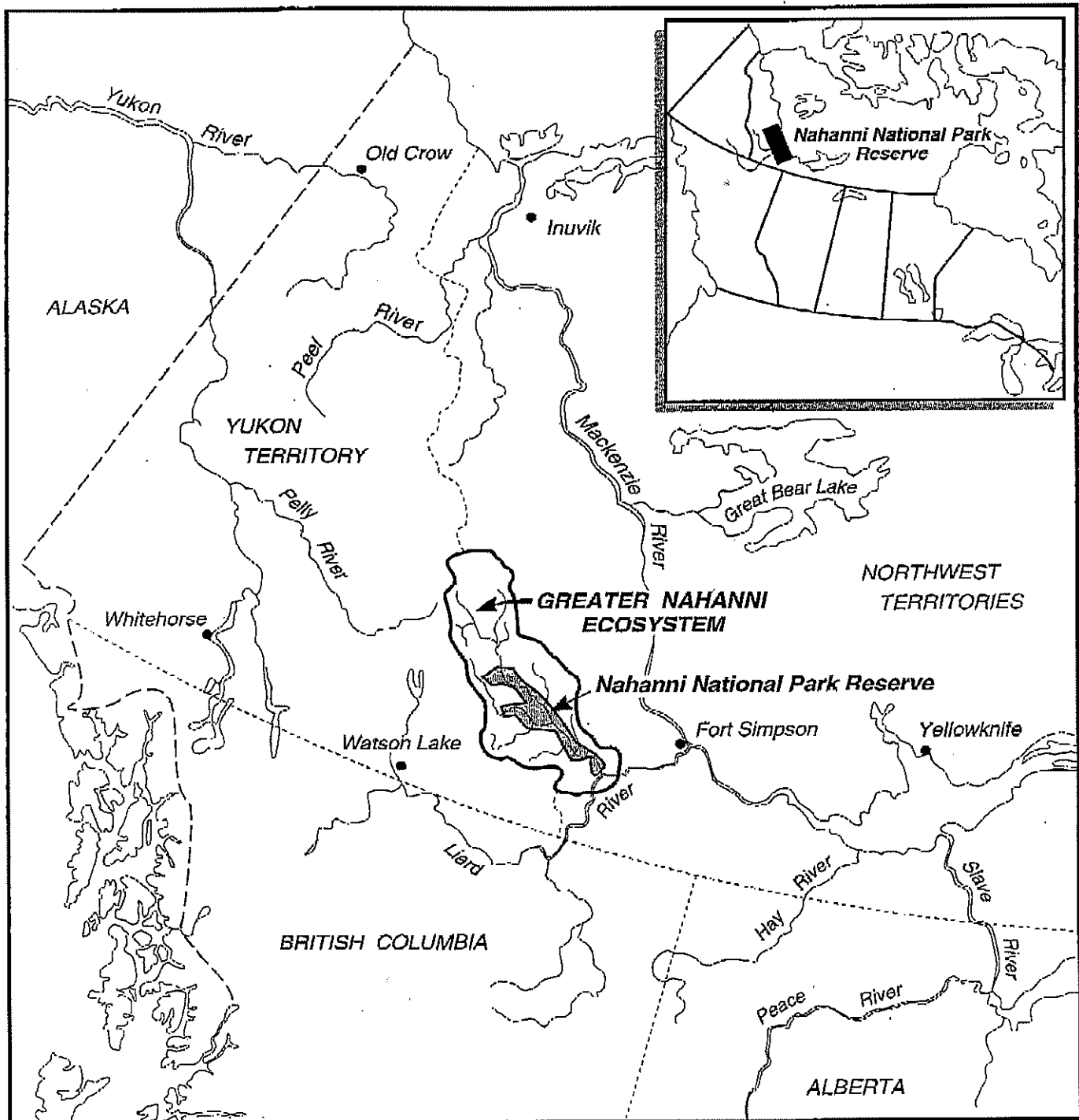


Figure 1. Greater Nahanni Ecosystems

relative isolation and wilderness of the watershed has served to protect the park. However, existing and possible future adjacent land uses such as mining, big game hunting, tourism development and uncontrolled access have the potential to affect the park's ecological and wilderness integrity. Within the context of an ecosystem-based approach to management, the South Nahanni River watershed is the extent of the park's immediate concern.

3.2 WILDERNESS

The Nahanni wilderness was the prime rationale for the park's establishment. This feature is an important part of the natural heritage of the park and should be considered the paramount factor in park management and development. The Nahanni wilderness has a reputation among river travellers as the ultimate river adventure in Canada. For canoeists and rafters, the prime motivation for a trip to the park is to personally confront the Nahanni mystique. Dense myths, legends of lost gold and haunted valleys, and the remoteness of the region, combined with its stunning physical features, lure people to a "once in a lifetime" experience in this park.

The wilderness heritage that was the prime rationale for Nahanni's establishment as a national park reserve also characterizes the nature of its ecological integrity. Wilderness integrity will be maintained within the framework for an ecosystem-based approach to park management. Qualities of wilderness to be maintained in the park include:

- superb wilderness representation of the Mackenzie Mountains Natural Region;
- essentially unaltered, primitive, unpolluted river corridors in the greater Nahanni ecosystem; and
- opportunities for visitors to:
 - experience firsthand a World Heritage Site, the thrill of wild river touring, remoteness, and contemplative solitude;
 - enjoy a range of river experiences at varying skill levels, challenge their individual physical well-being, and build their self-esteem and self-affirmation;
 - travel by non-mechanized means; and,
 - relive the past by visiting places that embody the myths and legends of Nahanni.

3.2.1 WILDERNESS DESIGNATION

The 1988 amendment to the National Parks Act, section 5.8, provides for the designation, by regulation, of wilderness areas within a national park. This designation prohibits the authorization of any activities that would be likely to impair

a national park's wilderness character. To advance the preservation of wilderness in Nahanni, all of the park except the Rabbitkettle Lake and Virginia Falls areas are proposed to be designated, by regulation, as a wilderness area (fig. 2). This designation advocates wilderness as the character and values for which the park will be protected and gives recognition to wilderness as the nature of its ecological integrity.

3.3 REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Nahanni exists as an integral part of the character of the southwestern Northwest Territories and is recognized as the premier tourist destination in the region. As a national park it is affected by regional developments and has the potential to affect other interests in the region. The ecosystem-based approach to park management will integrate regional and park activities and concerns in a manner compatible with park objectives. This integration will be accomplished to a large extent through ongoing public involvement in the management of the park. Public involvement will provide key opportunities to build an understanding of the park, its mandate, and create opportunities for the public to contribute their knowledge and expertise to its management.

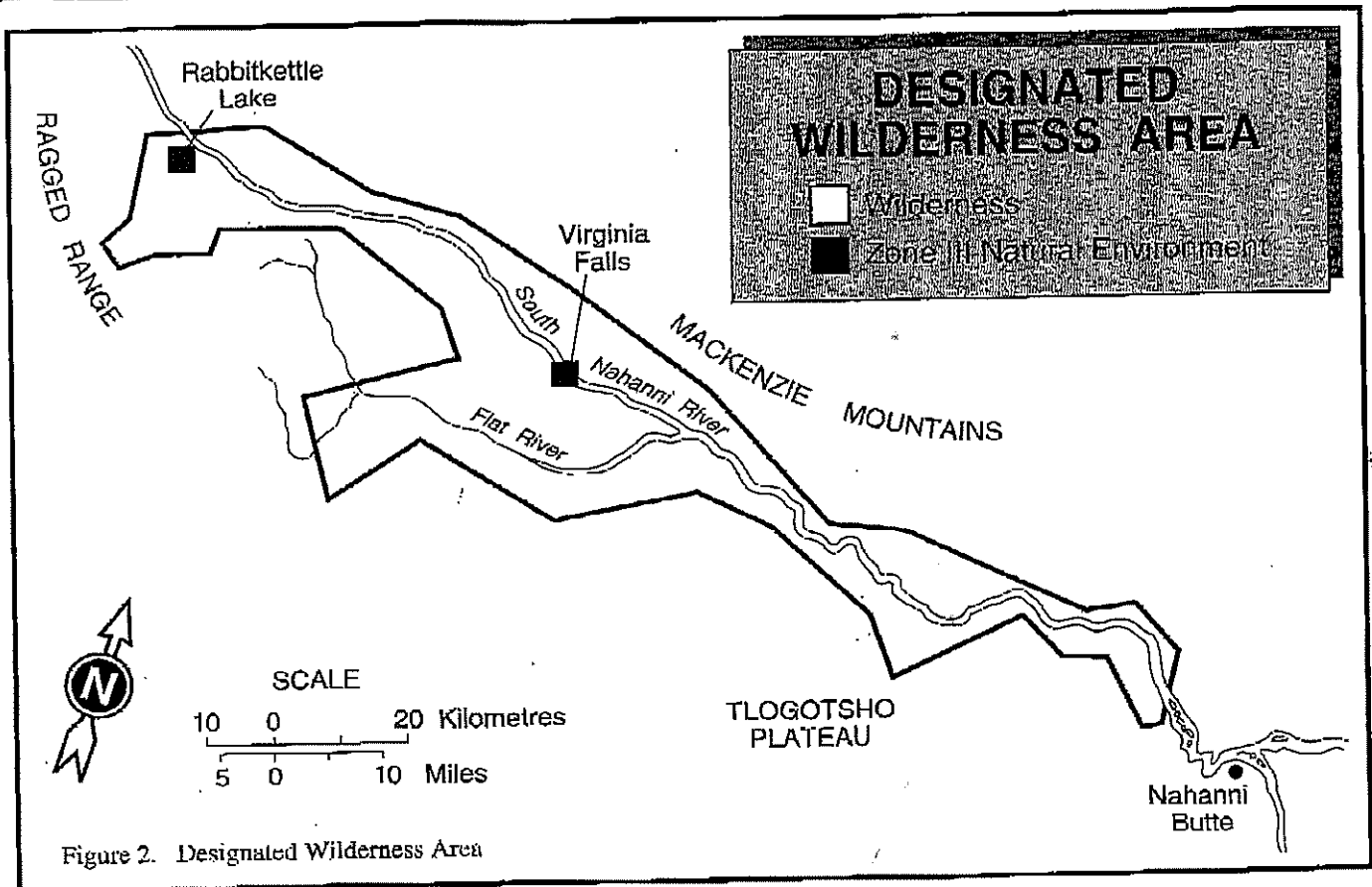
★ Parks Canada will work to involve a broad range of regional interests in the management of the park. This includes co-operation with federal, territorial and local governing bodies responsible for planning and managing the adjacent areas in order to resolve social, economic, and environmental issues and impacts in a mutually beneficial manner. Strategies to integrate park and regional activities and resource management concerns include the following:

- maintain a year-round Parks Canada presence in the region;
- promote public participation in park planning and management;
- reflect the cultural and historical diversity of the region in park interpretation and information programs;
- collaborate with regional tourism initiatives that are compatible with the park's purpose and objectives;
- encourage local people to choose a career in national parks; and,
- collaborate with traditional users of the park in the protection and management of its resources.

3.4 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource management activities in Nahanni National Park Reserve will be those activities directed toward the maintenance or modification of its natural and cultural resources in order to sustain its ecological integrity.

NAHANNI NATIONAL PARK RESERVE



3.4.1 NATURAL RESOURCES

Responsibilities related to natural resource management in Nahanni, within the context of an ecosystem-based approach to management, include the following:

- maintain biological diversity and distribution of populations such that they remain representative of the Mackenzie Mountains Natural Region;
- decision-making for the management and protection of natural resources will incorporate traditional ecological knowledge and be scientifically based;
- maintain natural processes as the primary forces affecting the evolution of the park resources;
- preserve and protect ecosystems from incompatible development through the application of the "Environmental Assessment and Review Process", Guidelines Order SOR-84-467, Government Organization Act;
- ensure sport fishing activities within the park do not jeopardize the natural regulation of fish populations;
- collaborate with traditional harvesters in the park, in the protection and management of natural resources, to ensure their activities are compatible with the natural regulation of fish and wildlife populations;
- develop and implement comprehensive and systematic resource monitoring and inventory programs to consider change within a regional and global context;
- promote collaboration between the park and adjacent development and resource management agencies that can influence the ecological integrity of the park;
- protect sensitive and endangered habitats and terrain characteristics;
- recognize the qualities of the park's wilderness heritage as important indicators of its ecological integrity;

- collaborate with adjacent land management and development interests in the development and maintenance of a comprehensive integrated data base, for the park and the greater Nahanni ecosystem;
- develop strategies to identify, prevent, reduce, or remove threats to the ecosystem; and
- convey information to the public, park visitors, and stakeholder interests that will enhance their appreciation, understanding, and stewardship of park ecosystems.

3.4.1.1 Water Quality

The water quality of the South Nahanni River watershed is a key measure of the park's ecological integrity and health. Consequently, Parks Canada will remain aware of and involved in regional planning, water use licensing, and general management of the South Nahanni River watershed. Parks will establish management strategies that ensure rivers within the park remain free-flowing, unpolluted wilderness waterways, and that no unnatural change in park water quality results from the water flow into the park. These strategies include:

- collaboration with the Federal Departments of the Environment, Fisheries and Oceans, and Indian Affairs in the testing and monitoring of water quality;
- collaboration with local resource and land use governing bodies to integrate their activities and concerns with those of the park, in a manner compatible with park objectives;
- acquisition and maintenance of adequate hydrological data to establish baseline conditions of park water quality; and,
- establishment and maintenance of a water quality monitoring network as a way to detect changes or trends over time in water quality.

3.4.1.2 Wildfire Management

Fire management in Nahanni will recognize the role that natural fires render in perpetuating the ecosystems of the park. Within this context and in consideration of regional concerns and interests, Parks Canada will:

- establish and maintain collaborative fire management agreements with the Northwest Territorial Government that recognize the role of natural fires in perpetuating the ecosystems of the park;
- maintain a fire suppression zone in the east end of the park to afford maximum protection to the village of Nahanni Butte, forestry resources outside the park, and

the areas used for traditional wildlife harvesting pursuits; and,

- maintain an observation zone in the park, outside the fire suppression zone, in which fires of natural origin are permitted to burn, except in special circumstances where intervention is required for public safety, to avoid serious adverse effects on adjacent lands, or for the protection of park and adjacent land use facilities.

3.4.2 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Responsibilities related to cultural resource management in Nahanni include the protection and management of significant living and past cultural resources and environments in accord with the principles of value, public benefit, understanding, respect, and integrity. Strategies to meet these responsibilities include:

- protect and present cultural resources according to their value;
- locate and record all significant cultural and ethnic resources;
- hold cultural resources in trust so that future generations may enjoy and benefit from them;
- manage cultural resources based on knowledge and professional and technical skills;
- manage cultural resources with continuous care and respect for their historic character;
- present the past in a way that accurately reflects the range and complexity of history;
- co-operate with Aboriginal people, local communities, external researchers, and heritage protection agencies in the identification of priorities for the protection of cultural resources and environments in the park;
- preserve significant knowledge and physical resources of the area's cultural history;
- continue to record oral history and the ecological knowledge of traditional users and local communities;
- manage known sites for both visitor use and resource preservation; and,
- present history in a form useful to the public and park managers.

3.5 PEOPLE IN THE ECOSYSTEM

An ecosystem-based approach to management in Nahanni gives recognition to the fact that people and ecosystems are not inseparable. The success of maintaining the park's ecological and wilderness integrity will be a result of the decisions made for both its protection and use.